



Embassy of the United States of America
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Installment Seventy-Five

Ask the Consul – Fraud and the Visa Process

As you begin to prepare for your visa interview, whether planning to migrate on an immigrant visa or planning to take a short-term trip on a non-immigrant visa, it is important to be aware of the consequences of committing fraud. This edition of *Ask the Consul* is designed to answer questions on the importance of truthfulness when applying for a United States visa.

I have a visa interview coming up soon for my immigrant visa and I am unable to get an updated birth certificate from the GRO in time. I heard that there are persons who can get me the document quickly. Should I choose to obtain one using this faster method?

No. Please do not attempt to purchase a fraudulent document of any kind to present during your interview. While the U.S. Embassy wishes to have applicants come prepared for the interview, presenting a document that was fraudulently obtained or that contains information that is not correct, can result in your being found permanently ineligible for a U.S. visa and prevent you from ever going to the United States. Instead, please explain your circumstances during the interview and the interviewing consular officer will discuss any missing documents that you may still need to acquire in order to successfully complete your immigrant visa processing. You will then be given an opportunity to legally get the missing documents you need.

What are the consequences of committing fraud to obtain a visa?

Sometimes visa applicants commit fraud in an effort to obtain a non-immigrant visa or an immigrant visa. Misrepresentations can range from overstating one's income to falsifying employment or family relationships, such as pretending to be the spouse of a U.S. citizen or working for a company that does not exist. Committing fraud is a very serious offense with grave consequences. Presenting false or misleading information during the interview can cast doubt on the validity of your entire application and result in a permanent refusal. The Consular Section sees many otherwise qualified applicants who wrongly believe that making false statements or presenting fraudulent documents is the only way to obtain a visa.

For the person committing fraud, the consequences are extremely serious. Visa interviews are conducted under oath. If you commit fraud, you may be found permanently ineligible for a visa to enter the United States. In addition, a person found guilty of knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact or using a false document may be fined a considerable fee and/or sentenced to jail time. Permanent residents (those with green cards) who have engaged in fraud may be deported or lose their opportunity to become U.S. citizens. Even U.S. citizens who obtained their immigrant visas through fraud may lose their U.S. citizenship and be deported. The Consular Section's Fraud Prevention Unit aggressively pursues fraud and those willfully committed fraud are likely to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

What can I do to avoid fraud or the appearance of fraud?

Educate yourself about the visa categories and requirements for each at www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors.html (non-immigrant visas) and www.travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants_types.html (for immigrant visas). If you know that you are not qualified for a visa, do not apply. It is possible that you could qualify in the future. A poor attempt at fraud now could destroy any legitimate chance you have of traveling to the United States in the future.

The U.S. Embassy reminds applicants seeking an immigrant visa wishing to migrate permanently to the United States to bring the correct documents at the outset of their visa interview and not take shortcuts. A forged document of any kind can render you ineligible for a visa. If you are applying for a non-immigrant visa, be aware that most persons going temporarily to the United States are not required to present any additional supporting documents, aside from their passport and completed visa application. However, you should be prepared truthfully to answer fully all questions asked during the non-immigrant visa interview or risk being found permanently ineligible for lying.

I was arrested when I was very young, should I mention this during my visa interview?

If you have had problems with the law in Guyana or in the United States or with U.S. immigration authorities in the past, chances are that the U.S. Embassy either already knows about it, or will discover it before you are issued a visa. Be honest during your interview and tell the consular officer about that brush with the law. In the cases of those seeking to migrate to the United States, a waiver may be available for applicants who have made mistakes in the past so be sure to answer questions on any legal problems completely and truthfully.

My friend is filling out my visa application for me, will that present any problems for me?

It is important to remember that you are responsible for what information you give to the consular officer during your interview. Your signature on the application indicates that you have read

everything in the application and that any verbal statements or written documents presented are true and correct. If you are applying for an immigrant visa, it is recommended that you obtain documents like marriage and birth certificates personally. Review the information in those documents to make sure it is correct before appearing for your visa interview. If another family member, friend, or legal representative has acquired the documents on your behalf, double check them to be sure that they are true. If you pay someone else to get documents for you, the documents you receive may be false and cause you to permanently become ineligible for a U.S. visa.

How do I report information about fraud to the Embassy?

If you have a tip concerning fraud that you wish to share with us, you may contact the Fraud Prevention Unit by e-mailing us at visageorge@state.gov or calling us at 225-7965 between 8 am- 12 pm and 1 pm- 4 pm Monday through Thursday and between 8 am and 12 pm on Fridays. Please provide the full name and date of birth when possible. By assisting to reduce fraud, you are helping to make visa processing easier and more efficient for all applicants.

“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/guyana/ask_con.html. For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.